

Last weekend, the Reverend Billy Graham held what could be his last crusade. The crusade in New York marked the culmination of a life dedicated to preaching faith, equality, and love to people the world over.

As a young man growing up in rural Kansas, I remember gathering in front of the television set with my mom and dad to hear this man speak. With integrity and truth he spoke of God's love for all people and our need to know this love in our own hearts. Even at that young age, I sensed that there was something special about this man; and, as I grew older, his words were a source of strength to my faith.

In times of trouble and disaster, we turn to God for strength and comfort. Three days after September 11, 2001, as our Nation grieved the loss of life, America needed to have its faith restored. Our sense of peace that we had felt in our neighborhoods and our towns and our country had been severely shaken, and our belief in the goodness of man had been severely challenged.

Billy Graham, showing the effects of Parkinson's disease and age, slowly climbed the steps to the pulpit at the National Cathedral during a service to reflect upon these events. Although physically frail, the strength of his spirit projected confidence. With the assurance of his faith, he helped us understand that despite the evil that we had seen, God's love remains, God's love never fails and, with that love as our foundation, we could prevail. Reverend Graham's words gave meaning to the lives lost and restored faith to a mourning Nation.

In 1957, Billy Graham held his first of seven crusades in New York City. Although his crusade in 1957 occurred at a time in our Nation's history when race divided all, Reverend Graham refused to preach in segregated audiences.

To begin one night of the crusade in 1957, Reverend Graham invited Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to give an opening prayer. Another night of the crusade, the event was presented in Spanish. Reverend Graham and his team went to great lengths to ensure that the crusade meetings were accessible to those with disabilities. Although he had intended the crusade to last only 6 weeks, he stayed 16, in order to meet the needs of the people of New York.

By refusing to restrict his message to one audience, Billy Graham affirmed the equality of all people and God's equal love for all. Returning last weekend to New York City, Reverend Graham continued sharing his message of faith, equality, and love for all people.

Billy Graham has been a spiritual adviser to every President since my fellow Kansan, Dwight D. Eisenhower. He has written 24 books. His radio program "Hour of Decision" has been broadcast on Sundays around the world for more than 50 years. Reverend

Graham has even been rated 47 times by the American people as one of the "Ten Most Admired Men in the World." However, it is his ability to reach people with the message of God's love that makes Billy Graham truly a special man.

Throughout his ministry, Billy Graham has preached to over 210 million people in more than 185 countries and territories. Yet, it is his personal impact on my life and the encouraging words that he has left with our Nation that I am most grateful for and will always cherish.

Marking the occasion of his last crusade, I rise tonight to honor and thank Reverend Billy Graham for his influence on my life, on our Nation, and the world.

IN SUPPORT OF FULLY FUNDING THE NEEDS OF OUR VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, for 2 years, the Democrats in the House have been saying that the veterans budget is underfunded. It has been denied by the Bush administration. Last year we were joined by the Republican chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) who knew that the veterans budget was underfunded. For supporting us in the effort to increase veterans spending to help meet the promises and the obligations of our government and the American people to those who have served our country in its time of need, he was removed from the committee chairmanship. He was torn out of that position because he had the temerity to say there was not enough money to meet the obligations to America's veterans.

As recently as yesterday, the Republican leadership resisted a Democratic amendment on a party-line vote to increase funding for veterans benefits because they said there was no problem.

Now, today they are scrambling to find \$2.6 billion that they admit the budget is underfunded, and they say, well, no, we blame the actuaries. The political hack that Bush appointed to be head of the Veterans Administration, the former Republican National Committee chair, said they did not realize there was a war in Iraq or Afghanistan. The estimates were made in 2002, and he had not read the paper since. So he did not know there were any veterans coming home who had lost their limbs, who were grievously injured. So they did not revise those things until just yesterday, when they realized they are \$1 billion short for this year and \$2.6 billion short for next year.

Come on. Do you think the American people believe that the Bush administration does not read the papers, does not realize we are at war in Iraq and Afghanistan, when there are tens of thousands of Americans coming home

who are only asking one thing: you made me a promise when I signed up and put my life on the line. You promised you would take care of me if I was wounded, and you promised you would take care of my family if I died. That is a pretty simple promise. We have made that to every person who signed up in an all-volunteer military, and this administration has broken that promise.

I have veterans who have been waiting 6 months for an initial appointment, veterans in pain who cannot get operations, and they say, come back in 2 years, 2 years. This has been going on for years now. Two years this has been going on with this administration as they slash the veterans budget, and they deny there is a problem and suddenly they say, it was their actuaries who were wrong because they made a prediction in 2002 and the Bush administration did not notice that we were at war since then and that we had a whole lot more veterans.

This is extraordinary. An administration that wants to wrap itself in the flag and talk about supporting the troops who is not willing to put up the money to deliver on the solemn promises that we have made to these veterans and to their dependents and to their families. This is outrageous. And just yesterday, they defeated, on a party-line vote, an amendment just to put \$1 billion back in and take that money from the millionaires and billionaires in America, to reduce their tax cuts from \$141,000 to \$129,000 a year. Most Americans do not even earn that, but the Republicans could not even vote to reduce the millionaires' tax cuts that much to fully fund for this year, not next year, veterans benefits. We are going to need a lot more money next year for veterans who are going to need services. It is going to be very expensive to meet our promises and our obligations.

It is time that this administration and this Republican-led Congress acted in good faith to fully fund those benefits. No more denial of medical services and benefits to veterans because we say we do not have enough money. We have the money if we can restrict the permanent tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires to give to our Nation's veterans, those who have given so much in service to our country.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GUTKNECHT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HOPE IN THE DARKNESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FRANKS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, I stand on the floor of this House tonight with great hope in my heart for